

He gan first fallen of the werre in speche
Bitwixe hem and the folk of Troye toun;
And of thassege he gan hir eek byseche,
To telle him what was hir opinoun.
fro that demaunde he so descendeth doun
To asken hir, if that hir straunge thoughte
The Grekes gyse, & werkes that they wroughte?

And why hir fader tarieth so longe
To wedden hir unto som worthy wight?
Criseyde, that was in hir peynes stronge
for love of Troilus, hir owene knight,
As ferforth as she conning hadde or might,
Answerde him tho; but, as of his entente,
It semed not she wiste what he mente.

But natheles, this ilke Diomedes
Gan in himself assure, and thus he seyde:
If ich aright have taken of yow hede,
Me thinketh thus, O lady myn, Criseyde,
That sin I first hond on your brydel leyde,
Whan ye out come of Troye by the morwe,
Ne coude I never seen yow but in sorwe.

Can I not seyn what may the cause be
But if for love of som Troyan it were,
The which right sore wolde athinken me
That ye, for any wight that dwelleth there,
Sholden spille a quarter of a tere,
Or pitously yourselven so bigyle;
for dredeles, it is nought worth the whyle.

The folk of Troye, as who seyth, alle and some
In preson been, as ye yourselven see;
for thennes shal not oon onlyve come
for al the gold bitwixen sonne and see.
Trusteth wel, and understondeth me,
Ther shal not oon to mercy goon onlyve,
Al were he lord of worldes twyes fyve!

Swich wreche on hem, for fecching of Eleyne,
Ther shal be take, er that we hennes wende,
That Manes, which that goddes ben of peyne,
Shal been agast that Grekes wol hem shende.
And men shul drede, unto the worldes ende,
from hennesforth to ravishe any quene,
So cruel shal our wreche on hem be sene.

And but if Calkas lede us with ambages,
That is to seyn, with double wordes slye,
Swich as men clepe a word with two visages,
Ye shul wel knowen that I nought ne lye,
And al this thing right seen it with your ye,
And that anon; ye nil not trowe how sone;
Now taketh heed, for it is for to fare!

What wene ye your wyse fader wolde
Han yeven Antenor for yow anon,
If he ne wiste that the citee sholde
Destroyed been? Why, nay, so mote I goon!
He knew ful wel ther shal not scapen oon
That Troyan is; and for the grete fere,
He dorste not, ye dwelte lenger there.

What wole ye more, lufsom lady dere?
Lat Troye and Troyan fro your herte pace!
Dryf out that bittre hope, and make good chere,
And clepe ayein the beautee of your face,
That ye with salte teres so deface,
for Troye is brought in swich a jupartye,
That, it to save, is now no remedye.

And thenketh wel, ye shal in Grekes finde
A more parfit love, er it be night,
Than any Troyan is, and more kinde,
And bet to serven yow wol doun his might.
And if ye vouche sauf, my lady bright,
I wol ben he to serven yow myselve,
Ye, lever than be lord of Greces twelve!

And with that word he gan to waxen reed,
And in his speche a litel wight he quook,
And caste asyde a litel wight his heed,
And stinte a while; and afterward awook,
And sobrelliche on hir he threw his look,
And seyde: I am, al be it yow no joye,
As gentil man as any wight in Troye.

for if my fader Tydeus, he seyde,
Ylived hadde, I hadde been, er this,
Of Calidone and Arge a king, Criseyde!
And so hope I that I shal yet, ywis.
But he was slayn, alas! the more harm is,
Unhappily at Thebes al to rathe,
Polymites and many a man to scathe.

But herte myn, sin that I am your man,
And been the ferste of whom I seche grace,
To serven you as hertely as I can,
And ever shal, why! I to live have space,
So, er that I departe out of this place,
Ye wol me graunte, that I may tomorwe,
At bettre leyser, telle yow my sorwe.

What shold I telle his wordes that he seyde?
He spak ynow, for o day at the meste;
It preveth wel, he spak so that Criseyde
Graunted, on the morwe, at his requeste,
for to speken with him at the leste,
So that he nolde speke of swich matere;
And thus to him she seyde, as ye may here:

As she that hadde hir herte on Troilus
So faste, that ther may it noon arace;
And straungely she spak, and seyde thus:
O Diomedes, I love that ilke place
Ther I was born; and Joves, for his grace,
Delivere it sone of al that doth it care!
God, for thy might, so leve it wel to fare!

That Grekes wolde hir wraththe on Troye wreke,
If that they mighte, I knowe it wel, ywis.
But it shal not bifallen as ye speke;
And God toform, and ferther over this,
I wot my fader wys and redy is;
And that he me hath bought, as ye me tolde,
So dere, I am the more unto him holde.

That Grekes been of heigh condicioun,
I wot eek wel; but certein, men shal finde
As worthy folk withinne Troye toun,
As conning, and as parfit and as kinde,
As been bitwixen Orcades and Inde,
And that ye coude wel your lady serve,
I trowe eek wel, hir thank for to deserve.

But as to speke of love, ywis, she seyde,
I hadde a lord, to whom I wedded was,
The whos myn herte al was, til that he deyde;
And other love, as helpe me now Pallas,
Ther in myn herte nis, ne never was.
And that ye been of noble and heigh kinrede,
I have wel herd it tellen, out of drede.

And that doth me to han so gret a wonder,
That ye wol scornen any womman so,
Eek, God wot, love and I be fer asonder;
I am disposed bet, so mote I go,
Unto my deeth, to pleyne and maken wo.
What I shal after doon, I can not seye;
But trewely, as yet me list not pleye.

Myn herte is now in tribulacioun,
And ye in armes bisy, day by day.
Hereafter, whan ye wonnen han the toun,
Paraunter, thanne so it happen may,
That whan I see that I never er say,
Than wole I werke that I never wroughte!
This word to yow ynough suffyzen oughte.

Tomorwe eek wol I speke with yow fayn,
So that ye touchen nought of this matere.
And whan yow list, ye may come here ayeyn;
And, er ye gon, thus muche I seye yow here:
As helpe me Pallas with hir heres clere,
If that I sholde of any Greek han routhe,
It sholde be yourselven, by my trouthe!

I sey not therfore that I wol yow love,
Ne I sey not nay, but in conclusioun,
I mene wel, by God that sit above:
And therwithal she caste hir eyen doun,
And gan to syke, and seyde: O Troye toun,
Yet bidde I God, in quiete and in reste
I may yow seen, or do myn herte breste.

But in effect, and shortly for to seye,
This Diomedes al freshly newe ayeyn
Gan pressen on, and faste hir mercy preyre;
And after this, the sothe for to seyn,
Hir glove he took, of which he was ful fayn.
And fynally, whan it was waxen eye,
And al was wel, he roos and took his leve.

The brighte Venus folwede and ay taughte
The wey, ther brode Phebus doun alighte;
And Cynthea hir char/hors overraughte
To whirle out of the Lyon, if she mighte;
And Signifer his candeles shewed brighte,
Whan that Criseyde unto hir bedde wente
Inwith hir fadres faire brighte tente.

Retorning in hir soule ay up and doun
The wordes of this sodein Diomedes,
His greet estat, and peril of the toun,
And that she was allone and hadde nede
Of freendes help; and thus bigan to brede
The cause why, the sothe for to telle,
That she tok fully purpos for to dwelle.

The morwe com, and goostly for to speke,
This Diomedes is come unto Criseyde,
And shortly, lest that ye my tale breke,
So wel he for himselfe spak and seyde,
That alle hir sykes sore adoun he leyde.
And fynally, the sothe for to seyne,
He refte hir of the grete of al hir peyne.

And after this the story telleth us,
That she him yaf the faire baye stede,
The which she ones wan of Troilus;
And eek a broche, and that was litel nede,
That Troilus was, she yaf this Diomedes.
And eek, the bet from sorwe him to releve,
She made him were a pencil of hir sleve.

I finde eek in the stories elleswhere,
Whan through the body hurt was Diomedes
Of Troilus, tho weep she many a tere,
Whan that she saugh his wyde woundes blede;
And that she took to kepen him good hede,
And for to hele him of his sorwes smerte,
Men seyn, I not, that she yaf him hir herte.

But trewely, the story telleth us,
Ther made never womman more wo
Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus.
She seyde: Alas! for now is clene ago
My name of trouthe in love, for evermo!
for I have falsed oon, the gentileste
That ever was, and oon the worthiest!

Alas, of me, unto the worldes ende,
Shal neither been ywritten nor ysonge
No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.
O, rolled shal I been on many a tonge;
Throughout the world my belle shal be ronge;
And wommen most wol hate me of alle,
Alas, that swich a cas me sholde falle!

They wol seyn, in as muche as in me is,
I have hem don dishonour, weylaway!
Al be I not the firste that dide amis,
What helpeth that to do my blame away?
But sin I see there is no bettre way,
And that to late is now for me to rewe,
To Diomedes algate I wol be trewe.

But Troilus, sin I no better may,
And sin that thus departen ye and I,
Yet preyre I God, so yeve yow right good day
As for the gentileste, trewely,
That ever I say, to serven feithfully,
And best can ay his lady honour kepe:
And with that word she brast anon to wepe.